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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: November Report and December Sermons

Herald of Truth

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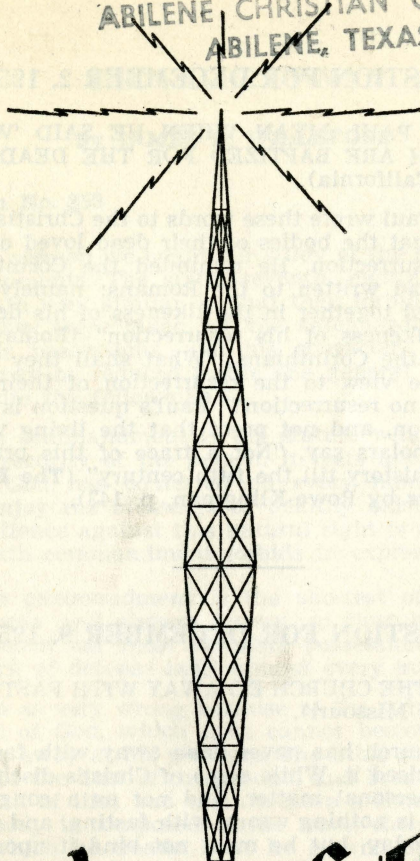
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SALUTE YOU

NOVEMBER REPORT
AND

DECEMBER SERMONS
1956



QUESTION FOR DECEMBER 2, 1956

"WHAT DID PAUL MEAN WHEN HE SAID 'WHAT SHALL THEY DO WHICH ARE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD?'" (Question from Pasadena, California).

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Corinth to assure them that the bodies of their dead loved ones would be raised in the resurrection. He reminded the Corinthians of the same truth he had written to the Romans: namely, that "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5). Now, the apostle asks the Corinthians, "What shall they do who were baptized with the view to the resurrection of their bodies after death if there be no resurrection?" Paul's question is an argument for the resurrection, and not proof that the living were baptized for the dead. Scholars say, "Not a trace of this practice can be found in church history till the fifth century" (**The Bible in Questions and Answers** by Rowe-Klingman, p. 143).

QUESTION FOR DECEMBER 9, 1956

"WHEN DID THE CHURCH DO AWAY WITH FASTING?" (Question from Jadwin, Missouri).

The Lord's church has never done away with fasting because it has never practiced it. While some of Christ's disciples fasted, it was done as a personal matter, and not as a congregational or church act. There is nothing wrong with fasting, and an individual may practice it today, but he must not bind it upon others as a religious rite.

QUESTION FOR DECEMBER 16, 1956

"DOES A WOMAN HAVE THE RIGHT TO SUBMIT A SCRIPTURAL OBJECTION WHEN THE NAMES OF MEN FOR ELDERS OR DEACONS ARE PLACED BEFORE A CONGREGATION?" (Question from Duncan, Oklahoma).

Certainly a Christian woman has such a right. It is not only the right, but the duty of any Christian—man or woman—to keep the church pure. When the Lord gave the qualifications that a man must have before he can serve as an elder, or a deacon, the qualifications were made known to every member of the church. If a Christian woman knows definitely that a prospective elder, or deacon, does not meet some of these scriptural qualifications, she should make it known for the protection of the church.

THE VALUE OF MAN

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 253

December 2, 1956

With this sermon we begin our study of the second half of the Ten Commandments. The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth commandments are very similar in that they forbid sins against our fellowmen. They were given for the safeguarding of man's life, his home, his possessions, and his character. These four commandments may be reduced to the one general command, "Thou shalt not injure thy fellowman."

The sixth commandment is the statute which guards human life and the security of the person. It rests upon the inalienable right which God has conferred on every human being to exist, and to enjoy the blessings of healthy existence unmolested. The capital offence against this natural right is murder, the crime which the sixth commandment forbids in express terms.

The sixth commandment is the shortest of the ten; it has only four words and sixteen letters, so that it can be quickly spoken to protect our most valuable possession. It is a wall of fire, a bulwark of defense built around every human life.

Murder is so very wrong because of the value of human life. It is the gift of God, which man cannot bestow, and which he must not take away at his pleasure. The Bible says, "Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Man's body is composed of the same chemical elements as the soil on which he treads. Dust he is, and unto dust he must return. But, thank God, man was to be something more than an organized mass of dust. The statue of clay was to become a living instrument. "God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Such is the origin of man as recorded in the sacred Scriptures. Infinite Deity was his maker. On his body side he sprang from dust and on his spirit side he sprang from God.

Thus in the very beginning, in the original make-up of him, man was a religious being. Coming into existence at Jehovah's inbreathing, man was, in the very fact of being divinely inbreathed, God's son and image. We never read the closing words of Luke's genealogy of our Lord without a thrill of awe at the remembrance of our divine origin. In the genealogy of Christ, Luke goes away back to the beginning of time, when he said, "The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38).

Hence it is that the human body is such a sacred thing. It is the shrine of God's spirit, God's breath. Wherever there is a hu-

man being, however wicked, there is an image of God; terribly defaced indeed, but not altogether wiped out, still bearing God's image and superscription. This is the very argument of James, when denouncing sins of the tongue, he said, "Therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God" (James 3:9). Someone was not far wrong when he said, "We touch heaven, when we lay our hand upon a human body."

Not only is man's body sacred and precious, but the life that animates it is sacred. It is a divine creation, and is therefore precious and valuable above everything else in this world. According to Jesus, the one object of supreme worth in this world is man. Over and over He sought to burn that conviction into our hearts. One day he held a pair of balances in His hand. Into one pan of those balances he put the whole world. Into the other He put man, not a certain type of man, just any man. And the world flew up as if it were light as a feather. With the balances in His hand, our Lord asked, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matthew 16:26). Man, divine in origin, made in God's image, endowed with infinite potentialities, built for eternity, created to know God and glorify Him forever, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, must be held in the highest esteem. His life must be regarded as sacred, and his dignity and greatness must be recognized.

No one who lives in the world, and sees what is going on in the world, and reflects upon it can fail to get some hint of the sacredness of man. He is a frail creature, easily crushed, hurt in a thousand ways—drowned in the sea, dashed on the rocks, burned in the fire. Nature gives no warning and destroys a man as indifferently as it does a tree, yet we cannot help thinking that man is greater and more sacred than sea or earth or sky—more sacred than all the forces of nature.

We do not think merely that man's life is more sacred, but that man himself is more sacred. When a great passenger ship goes onto the rocks and is a total wreck, hammered by the dash and swell of angry sea, we do not think of its cost, its rich furnishings, its splendid power plant, but we think of the men, women, and children who were aboard; and if they are safe, we care little about the ship.

The divine law against murder recognized the fact that life is God's gift. We may be able to take it, but we have no power to restore it. To kill, therefore, is a wrong that once done, cannot be undone. There is a dreadful finality about it. But the wickedness of murder does not consist as much in the wrong done to the murdered person, as in the attack the murderer makes on the prerogative of God. Man is made in His image, and whoever strikes a blow at that image, with murder in his heart, strikes a blow at God Himself. To take man's life is sacrilege. It is the

desecration of that temple which God reared with His own holy hands.

The one thing least understood in all the world is life. We do not know what it is. We know the signs of life and the effects of life, but we do not know life. Scientific men have not been able to define it. The difference between a living and a dead body is apparent, but what makes the difference we cannot understand very well. We say, "Life is gone," but what is life? The living man could write poems, sing songs, paint pictures, and thrill the world. He could win the hearts of thousands in a great city and make every man and woman in that city feel stronger and better for his presence; but when death comes, he can no longer do any of these things.

The man who takes life, therefore, takes all that belongs to life, all that goes with life. He takes away from the world the genius and aspiration of the man like Abraham Lincoln, who inspired and helped a whole continent—nay, the whole world. Such an act as the assassination of Garfield makes the world poorer. He who takes the most humble life takes he knows not what. He takes all that was hidden in that life. He "puts out the light" that burned brightly in some house of clay.

The wickedness of the crime of murder is also measured by the awful anguish and lonely misery of one who has committed it. Unless all history has been misread and misunderstood, there is a dreariness, wretchedness, dread, and an aching void at the heart of a murderer, which defy expression, find no relief, and are like the ceaseless gnawing of the worm that never dies. The first murderer said his burden was greater than he could bear. The smittings of conscience, the sense of guilt, the dread of arrest and punishment, the remorse of soul, the blood crying from the ground—these and other awful realities drive murderers abroad as wanderers and vagabonds in the earth.

One can almost measure civilization by the regard which it displays for human life. As people rise in virtue and intelligence, they hold man and his life in even greater veneration. Among barbarians human life is taken with almost wanton recklessness. In the lower grades of civilization it is held cheap, and the number of capital offenses is numerous.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, one of the earliest effects of their fall was the lessening of regard for the sacredness of life. The first son of the fallen pair was a murderer; the second son was his victim. Cain's slaying of Abel teaches us that regard for human life is endangered when regard for God is lost.

In the Roman world, as in much of the non-Christian world of today, an unborn child was not protected against death by abortion. Nor was there any sentiment against disposing of a newborn baby when its parents did not wish to rear it. Rome, for

military reasons, insisted that all healthy male babies should be kept, but the deformed or weakly and all female babies might be exposed to the elements with impunity.

It has not been many years since a cart went about the streets of Peking, China, gathering up the bodies of dead infants whose families chose to throw them out rather than keep them alive. (See **The Ten Commandments**, by H. S. Coffin, p. 124; Publisher, Doubleday, Doran and Company, New York, 1929).

One of the most shocking examples of murder was the gladiatorial shows in Rome, where men from all parts of the world fought each other to death for the amusement of the populace. "The extinction of the gladiatorial spectacles," writes Mr. Lecky, "is, of all the results of early Christian influence, that upon which the historian can look with the deepest and most unmingled satisfaction. Horrible as was the bloodshed they directly caused, these games were perhaps still more pernicious on account of the callousness of feeling they diffused through all classes, the fatal obstacles they presented to any general elevation of humanity. . . . Christianity alone was powerful enough to tear this evil plant from the Roman soil" (**The Ten Commandments**, by Coffin, p. 125).

Among ancient civilizations slave life, and the life of the poor did not count in the reckoning. Roman ladies of the upper class welcomed the plagues which swept away thousands of the poor people of the city, because it left them more room for their carriages to pass through the streets. (See **The Mosaic Law in Modern Life** by C. B. McAfee, p. 139; Publisher: Fleming H. Revell Co., New York).

In Egypt thousands of slaves were sacrificed in building the pyramids. The great pyramid has been called "the product of unpaid slave labor." There has come across all these years the reply made by an Egyptian king to one of his lieutenants who informed him that rollers on which a great stone was being moved needed a lubricant. The king ordered a wretched slave thrown under them, that his blood might lubricate them. Careful students of history tell us that the people of ancient civilizations had very little regard for human life.

The little regard that some would-be conquerors have had for human life is seen in Napoleon. When his army crossed the Alps his drummer boy was suddenly swept off the road into a crevasse by an avalanche. He was not injured, but he was lodged on a cliff where he could get neither up nor down. To tell of his plight he played the relief call on his drum. The men wished with all their hearts to go back and save this lad; but they did not dare to do so, for Napoleon refused to give the order for anyone to rescue him.

Some men who do not believe the Bible are so heartless and selfish that they hold human life to be a very cheap article. An unbelieving philosopher once said, "In the sight of God every

event is alike important; and the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster. Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?" (**The Commandments Up-to-Date**, by Rufus C. Zartmen, p. 123).

But the teaching of the Bible has brought reverence and respect for the value of man's life. To illustrate this truth, we relate a story told by H. L. Hastings. He said, "A friend of mine visited the Fiji Islands in 1844, and what do you suppose an infidel was worth there then? You could buy a man for a musket, or if you paid money, for seven dollars, and after you had bought him you could feed him, starve him, work him, whip him, or eat him. . . . But if you go there today you could not buy a man for seven million dollars. There are no men for sale there now. What has made the difference in the price of humanity? The twelve hundred Christian chapels scattered over that island tell the story. The people have learned to read the Book which says, 'Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ;' and since they learned that lesson, no man is for sale there" (**The Commandments Up-to-Date**, p. 124).

The Lord's teaching on brotherly love, and the worth of all men changed the face of the world. Before the coming of Christ, the old world had no clear idea of the unity of the human family, and it did not hold a foreigner's life to be equally precious with a citizen's, or a slave's with a freeman's. But when it dawned upon the race that Christ died to redeem all men, there has been a steady rise in the estimate placed upon life; upon the life of the young, the poor, the aged, and the invalid, as well as upon what we call more valuable lives.

Nowhere can this higher estimate of human existence be better seen than in the medical progress of Christian nations. With the noble profession of medical science, it has become not simply a point of honor, but the one fixed purpose that nothing is to be spared—no skill, no pains, no expense—which promises to prolong even for a single day the most worthless life in the most humble patient. Only from a lofty religious viewpoint can such a view of life's sacredness be fully justified. Such a high regard for life never could have developed among us if we had not been taught the spiritual worth of the men for whom Christ died. In Christian eyes the gift of life which God has bestowed upon us, is a boon to be religiously kept until He who has the keys of the grave shall take it. And the Christ who died to purchase us for eternal life has taught us to value our brother's existence at the worth of our own. The apostle John said, "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16).

There may be some of you who are saying in your hearts, "What's the use of preaching to us about murder? We never intend to commit this vile deed." But we should remember that the sixth commandment was given to the best people on earth, and yet, they

needed it. There are volcanic agencies hidden in man's nature. There are sleeping passions in every human soul, which may in a moment be roused into fury. Dark and horrible imaginations sometimes take possession of a human heart, and it seems to be set on fire of hell. Secret fires burst into open flames. Ah, the human heart, even in the best of us, is a nest where scorpions breed too easily. No man knows what he may possibly do. No murderer ever thought himself to be a potential murderer. He thinks himself like other men, and he is like other men.

You may look on a murderer as if he were an outlaw from humanity, as if an impassible gulf yawned between his moral nature and your own. Yet, had it been your lot, as it is sometimes that of the Christian minister, to enter the cell, and talk with the heart of the criminal, you would read a moral history no police report has brought to light. You would see in that sullen, bound form, one, who like you, was once upright. There was a time when he would have shuddered at the thought of such a crime, but years of lawless passion, and of vile companionships slowly hardened his character, until at last there came the moment of madness, and he plunged the knife into someone's heart. Yet even now he is not a monster, but a man, and when you touch some chord in that broken conscience, when he feels that you too are a man and not a judge, he cries with horror, "How could I ever do such a thing?"

We can insure ourselves against the possibility of committing murder by keeping our estimate of human life thoroughly Christian. What Jesus thinks of human life may be seen by what He did to redeem it. We are required to keep our estimate of life on the high plane where our Lord placed it.

We can guard against the sin of murder by catching the spirit of love for men which Christ displays. No law can prevent murder. It may control my hand, and prevent my dipping it in your blood, but no civil law can drive hate out of my heart. Nothing can drive it out but the putting in its place of something stronger and better. That something is the love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13:7). It comes into our lives from connection with Jesus Christ, and when it comes it is like the sunlight that comes into our darkened room and drives out the darkness with no noise or clamour, but gently and surely.

If you will turn to the Lord in faith, repent of your sins, confess the Saviour's name before men, and be buried with Him in baptism in order that your iniquities may be forgiven, you will be divinely enrolled in the school of Christ, where you will learn to love your neighbor as yourself. In His school you will be a disciple—a learner—and you will learn of Him to walk in the ways of peace, and in the path of righteousness forevermore.

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 254

December 9, 1956

The Lord's command against murder not only forbids actual killing, but also those attitudes and passions that may lead to the taking of life. Christ not only forbids the striking of the fatal blow, but He also forbids the passion that prompts the blow. Where does murder start? Not in the knife, nor in the poison. It starts in the heart of hatred. Our Lord says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man" (Matthew 15:19).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21,22). These words suggest that the great principle which our Lord is affirming, in place of the sixth commandment of the Mosaic law, is not intended merely to prevent the infliction of physical injury on our brother. The same principle which forbids us to murder our fellowman forbids us to treat him contemptuously and to refuse to acknowledge his claims to our consideration and respect. We are to remember that he is a man, and that he has a right to our reverence and homage. Whatever his infirmities, whatever his follies, whatever his sins, we are to recognize in him the very image of God.

In substance, Christ said, "You have been told not to murder; I tell you not to be angry with any one, not to be contemptuous of any one as a stupid fellow, not to condemn any one as morally worthless." There are other ways of violating the command, "Thou shalt not kill," than by putting a man to death. One way is in losing our temper when dealing with him. We may not say a word; we may control both tongue and facial expression, but in thought we have no use for him. Christ says this is ungodliness, because God has use for this man. Another way of violating the commandment is by making some expression derogatory of the other man's ability. The word "Raca" means "simpleton," "good-for-nothing," or "blockhead." Christ teaches that such expressions are wrong for God has made no human being good for nothing. A third way to violate the commandment is to call a man a worthless wretch, a fool. These expressions are wrong, for none is morally worthless; there are possibilities of good in the lowest of

men. Jesus tells us that we shall be called into account for anger that we harbor,—for the bitter curse that escapes our lips, for the mockery and scorn of our brother when we say to him, "Thou fool."

What did our Lord mean when He said that "everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the **judgment**; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the **council**; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the **hell of fire**?" There were in the Hebrew judicial system several courts. The court of "judgment" was the local court. The "council" was the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, the supreme court of Israel. The "hell of fire" was the fire in the hideous gorge to the south of Jerusalem where refuse was burned continually, and the fire was never quenched. The fire was used by the Lord as a type of the eternal punishment of the wicked.

Our Lord's phraseology was Jewish, but His meaning was for all men and for all time. He says unjust anger is worthy of the sentence of the court of judgment; the word of scorn, Raca, deserves the penalty of the supreme court, but to say, "Thou fool," brings peril of a punishment beyond these, even the fire of God. Christ is concerned with our **feelings** toward men for "From within, out of the heart of man proceed murders."

Someone may ask, "Does Christ forbid all anger?" Certainly not. In fact, it is positive sin to look, for example, on a scene of injustice, or oppression, or cruelty to man or beast, and not feel angry. How often did such scenes arouse the anger of the Lord! When the Pharisees objected to Christ's healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, He "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart" (Mark 3:5). When His disciples rebuked the parents of Perea for bringing their children to Him that He might bless them, He was "moved with indignation" (Mark 10:14). In the Bible, Christ is compared to a lamb, but it also speaks of "the wrath of the lamb" (Revelation 6:16). Nothing angered the Son of God more than hypocrisy, and He denounced it in scathing terms.

There is an anger that is in the highest sense right. Such was the anger of Jesus. His anger was right not because of His being the Son of God, but it was right because it was born, not of selfishness, but of unselfishness. His anger was right because it did not give Him a passion to injure those with whom He was angry, but only to help and to save them. An anger born of love which seeks to save, is right. What is just wrath but love itself at white heat? When Christ drove the moneychangers from the temple with a scourge, He respected the manhood of those He rebuked. His very words, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves," are witness of the higher and better expectations He cherished of them. So in view of the Lord's example, we must conclude that all anger is not wrong.

What, then, is the anger which Christ forbade in the Sermon

on the Mount? Evidently it was unreasonable, passionate, protracted, revengeful anger. We can better understand our Lord's teaching by reading a command of one of His apostles. The apostle Paul said, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26, 27). Our Savior teaches that though our anger, which is produced by a wrong we see done, is just, we must not brood over it. If we harbor the anger it will turn into malice, and hate, and hate may lead to murder.

But do you know that you do not have to kill a person to be a murderer? The Lord says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). You say you hate some man; he has done you or yours a great injury; he has wronged you bitterly, and you hate him. Then what will you do with the words of Christ? You say you would not lift your hand to injure him? You say you would never think of actually taking his life? No, but you have the seed of murder in your heart, and to withhold the hand from a murderous blow will not avail in the eyes of the Lord, so long as envy, hate, or malicious feelings rage in your bosom. If you get so angry or hate a person so that you wish him dead, you are a murderer in the sight of God, who looks upon the heart.

You say the person who has wronged you is impenitent, that he is brazen in his sin. Then God pity him, for while he is so he cannot be forgiven. But as for you, you do not aid his punishment by the sin of hatred. Let your heart do its share; let it offer forgiveness, let it bury its hate, let it cast out its murderous seed.

Let us suppose that one day you stand by the scaffold to witness the hanging of a condemned murderer. You see the poor wretch meet his death because he let hatred drive him to take the life of someone. You walk away from the scaffold after his soul is ushered into the presence of the Judge, hating some man in your heart. How do you differ from the criminal who has just died? He hated and that hatred had no restraining hand laid upon it, no self-control throttled that hate, or shut it in the man's bosom. So it leaped out and dealt the death-blow. The same hatred in your heart is held back, like a wild beast that cannot burst the chains that bind it. But it is the same wild beast, with the tiger blood in its veins, only that the good providence of God has given you chains to bind it, and you walk about free in the sight of men.

What can you do about your hate? Better chain the tiger, a million times better chain the tiger in your own heart, and not let him out. Murder in the heart wrongs only yourself. But a million times better than chaining the tiger is the killing of that tiger in your heart. Choke back your hatred. Let it not flame out against your enemy. But choke that hatred until it dies. You say you cannot? Think that over before you say it. You cannot be forgiven until you are willing to forgive. You cannot forgive? Then God who made you and who made your heart must bear the eternal blame for your banishment from Him. My friend, it is not so. You

and I and all men can forgive, and we must forgive. Is it hard? Yes but hatred is harder, and brings more misery in its train. Is anything more bitter than the feeling of revenge, or getting even? What disappointments it brings; how little satisfaction it ever brings; what bad taste it leaves in the mouth after the supposed sweet fruit of revenge is eaten!

The mind is somewhat like a radio; the dial can be turned to another melody. If a person feels anger coming on he can cure it by trying to be fair-minded about the cause of his anger. One cannot be fair and angry at the same time. An angry judge is never fair. The thought of revenge is cured by common sense; vengeance does not belong to us; "vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

When a person gets angry, he is said to be "beside himself." He becomes unbalanced. This is what some author had in mind when he wrote, "Anger is a wind which blows out the lamp of the mind." The exceedingly angry person is in exactly the same condition as the man who is intoxicated with strong drink; he does not know what he is doing. That was what caused Cain to kill his brother. That has been the cause of many murders, and no murder was ever committed which did not begin in the heart.

If, then, every one who is angry with his brother is a murderer, how many embryo assassins there are all around us; yea, it may be in our own bosoms! Who of us has kept the sixth commandment as it is given by our Lord in the New Testament? Who of us has not been angry, passionate, revengeful? Remembering, then, these quarrels of ours, these grudges and piques and faults of temper, who of us is not in danger of the penal fire of God?

But we are not yet through with the sixth commandment. Although it is prohibitive in form, saying, "Thou shalt not kill," yet it is affirmative in spirit, saying "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 2:39). It is not enough that we refrain from slaying our neighbor. A corpse or a wax figure could be obedient to that extent. We can obey this divine rule in the Christian sense, not by merely driving out anger, hate, and indifference, but by bringing in their opposites. We can obey heaven's instructions only by possessing good will toward our fellowmen.

We gain nobility by forgiveness, by replacing hatred with love. No man travels far up the road of love for his neighbor until he realizes that every mile of that road is one of increasing happiness. The ultimate joy of the world lies in the true spirit of forgiveness, not in successful hatred. If therefore, in your heart this day you find malice towards any man, no matter how he has wronged you, if there you find an unforgiving spirit you are on the road to unhappiness, not to peace.

And you who are not Christians will always have an unforgiving spirit until your heart is changed by the gospel. As Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). But its wickedness can be

changed to righteousness if you will, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed," and let the Lord keep His promise when He said, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26).

The Lord who knows the thoughts and intents of your heart will give you a "heart of compassion" if you will let Him. But He must have your permission. That is why the Son of God simply invited "all that labor and are heavy laden" to come unto Him for rest and peace. To people who accepted His invitation, the apostle Paul wrote, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17,18). But some in the apostle's day did not come to Christ for a rebirth of the spirit, and to them he said, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5).

If you insist on harboring malice you will die as a murderer in God's sight. And the Lord says, "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

But you need not die lost for God is anxious to forgive your sinful past. His forgiveness will come from a loving heart, and it will be complete. His willingness to forgive you may be illustrated in a small way by an incident I recently read. A young man said, "My father was fatally ill, and as I watched the precious life ebbing away, I was overcome with remorse at the thought that I must often have grieved that loving heart with my careless ingratitude and thoughtless disobedience. Penitently I begged his forgiveness for my wrongdoings in the past. With a look of ineffable love in his pain-dimmed eyes, he said, 'I can't remember that you ever did anything wrong.' I had expected instant forgiveness, but was not prepared for the full measure of pardon which I received. He could not remember my wrongs because of his great love for me. How like the Heavenly Father's love for us all! He says, 'For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more' (Hebrews 8:12)" (3000 Illustrations for Christian Service by Walter B. Knight, p. 291).

Will you receive a new heart and a new spirit from the Lord that you may be a new creature in Him? You can walk in newness of life where sin will no longer have dominion over you if you will believe in the Savior, repent of your sins, make a public confession of your faith in our Lord, and be buried with Him in baptism that you may be united with Him in the likeness of His

death. And then you can say with Christians of all ages, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:7).

IS IT EVER RIGHT TO KILL

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 255

December 16, 1956

Does the command, "Thou shalt not kill" mean that life may never be taken under any circumstances? Some have thought so. They say a burglar breaking into your house, or a murderer laying his hand on your life, is not to be killed; armies invading your country are not to be repelled; convicted criminals are not to be executed, for the law says, "Thou shalt not kill."

Some of you may say that there is no limitation or exception expressed or implied in the commandment, and therefore, **no life** may be taken. But, in that case what right have **you** to put a limit to it? Do you say that you put no limit to it? Well then, the commandment must prevent you from killing an ox, as well as a man; if you must not kill at all, you must not kill a sheep for food, nor poison a mad dog, nor shoot a wild beast. The commandment does not read, "Thou shalt not kill **a man**," but "Thou shalt not kill." If the command is not to be qualified in any way, we may not take plant life, animal life or human life.

But the Hebrew words translated, "Thou shalt not kill," when strictly rendered, mean, "Thou shalt do no murder." This makes the meaning plainer. All murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. There is accidental, unintentional killing which is not murder. The law of the land recognizes this fact, and God recognizes it. In the Old Testament safety for the unwitting slayer was distinctly provided for by the Lord (Numbers 35:9-15; Deuteronomy 19:1-10). Murder is the wilful, intentional taking of human life on the lone responsibility of the human will. It is the premeditated slaying of a human being. This is what the sixth commandment forbids.

It does not prohibit the taking of life in self-defense. Your life is just as valuable as the life of a burglar or a highway robber. Immediately after the Decalogue was given, God said that if a thief be killed in the act of stealing no blood should be shed for him (Exodus 22:2). Such killing would not be murder. Is not the same implied in the words of Christ, when He said, "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be

broken through" (Luke 12:39). Does this statement not imply that a man has the right to use force, if necessary, to prevent an armed robber from stealing his money or his merchandise? Suppose the robber is slain by the use of this force? Is the "goodman of the house" a murderer because he would not "suffer his house to be broken through?"

Some feel that capital punishment is wrong because of the command "Thou shalt not kill," but in the very chapter after this law was given, capital punishment was commanded. From the very time of Noah God ordained that. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6), and not for the crime of murder alone, but for several other offenses was the extreme penalty of the Mosaic law inflicted. The worship of graven images was punished with death. Blasphemy was punished with death. Sabbath-breaking was punished with death. Incurable disobedience to parents was punished with death. Murder was punished with death. Adultery was punished with death.

The commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder," was not intended to forbid the infliction of capital punishment. The claim that this commandment prohibits the taking of life under all circumstances makes God squarely contradict Himself, for He not only ordered the penalty of death for certain crimes, but He further required that no man be allowed to escape the penalty by the payment of money. To the people of Israel, the Lord said, "ye shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer, that is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death" (Numbers 35:31). It was the custom among some eastern races to permit the avenger of the crime of murder to accept compensation in money instead of inflicting death on the criminal. The obvious result of this was to give license to the revengeful passions of the rich, while it left the poor exposed to the extreme penalty of their crimes. The Lord, therefore, absolutely forbade the taking of satisfaction for the life of a murderer, and insisted that "he shall surely be put to death."

Some suggest that a murderer should be imprisoned for life, and that this is sufficient punishment for his crime. But suppose he kills the warden while he is in the penitentiary? Now what shall be done with this offender? There is no punishment left for his second crime because he was given the extreme punishment when he was sentenced to imprisonment for life. For his second crime of murder there is therefore no additional punishment, and for the new crime there is no additional penalty.

But do you say the murderer should be hanged or electrocuted after his second murder? If so, then capital punishment is after all expedient, permissible and necessary. The nation may well say to such a criminal: We believe that man is akin to God, and we will assert the dignity of man by inflicting on murder a penalty which shall be awful in its unique terror. Other offenses may be punished by inferior sentences, but he who forgets that his fellow-

man is something more than a brute, shall be swept away into infinite darkness; he has committed an offense which human laws cannot adequately punish; he shall be sent swiftly to account for his crime before a higher and more august tribunal than ours. This is the very argument of the ancient law: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for **in the image of God** made He man."

There is one thing for sure: No man can prove that capital punishment is wrong by using the Old Testament. It is true that the sixth commandment forbade the crime of murder, but the very penalty for violating the fourth commandment was death. Did the sixth commandment contradict the penalty of the fourth? If capital punishment is murder, and if peace officers are murderers, then one commandment prohibited what the other commandment required! But since capital punishment under certain circumstances was divinely required **under the same law** that said, "thou shalt not kill," it follows that there is a difference between it and murder.

Does the command, "Thou shalt not kill," absolutely forbid war between nations? In answering this question, let us remember that the nation to which this law was first given was a fighting nation from the beginning. Every man in it was a fighter. The people marched in battle array, and camped in military order. Their history is a history of wars. Moses himself prayed to God that the hosts of Israel might be victorious over their enemies.

The sixth commandment was a law for rulers and nations, as well as for individuals. It says to nations as well as to individuals, "Thou shalt do no murder." War is sometimes murder. All unjust wars, all ambitious and aggressive wars, all conflicts of armies with armies, waged for glory and renown,—these wars bring upon the nations engaged in them, and upon the rulers of those nations, the guilt of murder. It is obvious that the same law which condemns individual or single murder condemns with a thousand-fold emphasis systematic murder on a vast scale, as we may justly term every unprovoked or needless war—war waged by the powerful upon the weak in the pursuit of territorial or commercial conquest. History will judge and God will punish men who wage such wars, although His penalties linger oftentimes with leaden feet, or creep after us noiselessly as though shod with wool. Empires built up with violence and fraud never have stood, and it is certain they never will stand, always secure, prosperous, or at peace. The state which deliberately takes the sword by the sword shall perish.

War comes of evil and as Christians we must see to it that we do nothing to make it come. But when our land is ruthlessly attacked, Christians may have to take arms and do their part in defending themselves. If self defense is right, it is "Christian" for Christians to do it! In 1861 our fathers faced the issue of slav-

ery or war, and today few men, in the South or the North, regret that war was chosen, the issue settled, and slavery banished from the land.

Surely we all agree that war is out of harmony with the spirit of Christ, but the statement that war is incompatible with Christianity does not warrant the conclusion that no Christian can under any circumstances participate in the military service. Murder and robbery are also incompatible with Christianity but it does not mean that one cannot defend himself against murderers and robbers. There is a vast difference between a murderer and one who defends his life and the lives of others against a murderer. There is a lot of difference between starting a war and defending a free government against those who make a business of starting and waging wars of conquest.

Defensive wars are sometimes thrust by an aggressor nation upon a nation that loves peace. National life, as well as individual life, is a sacred trust. Injustice, cruelty, and oppression are to be resisted. The crimes of Napoleon were justly punished when the allied armies of Europe forced him to surrender and shut him up on a lonely island. The Lord said the children of Israel were justified in casting out the heathen nations from Canaan. To His people, the Lord said, "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but **for the wickedness of these nations** the Lord doth drive them out from before thee" (Deuteronomy 9:4). The Israelites were the Lord's instrument in punishing people who had become ruthless and devoid of all feeling for their fellowmen. God gave life to the heathen nations in Canaan, and because of their terrible crimes the Lord had the armies of Israel to take back what He had given to these people.

It must be granted that the existence of great armies and navies is a visible and awful demonstration of the evil passions which still retain their hold on the hearts of men. But is it quite certain that armies should, therefore, be disbanded, and ships of war turned into merchantmen? We think not. While crime still exists in this country the police are necessary, judges are necessary, jails are necessary. The existence of all these is a proof that evil passions and evil deeds still disgrace our national life, but while the crimes continue the means of repressing them must not be surrendered. And while nations or their rulers continue capable of still more gigantic crimes than individuals can commit, the means of repressing such nations must, by a sad necessity, be sustained.

We hope the time is fast coming when, in the judgment of all men, no nation will ever be justified in resorting to war except after every attempt at peaceful arbitration has been thoroughly tried. We are certain that war is never justified unless its object

is to restrain aggression—aggression which cannot by any less extreme measure be restrained.

It is our prayer that Longfellow's dream of universal peace may become a reality. In his poem, **Arsenal at Springfield**, he foresees the end of war, and the reign of Christ in the hearts of men. He says:

Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter, and then cease;
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, Peace!
Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies;
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise.

(From **The Ten Commandments**, by George D. Boardman, p. 208; Publisher: The Judson Press, Chicago; 1946).

Although we deplore war, we recognize that it may be as necessary to repel an invading army to save the life of a nation, as it is right to kill a wild beast in order to protect and to save human life. But some say, "All war is wrong and sinful, regardless of who wages it or why." It is sinful then, for a police force to function in protecting our homes against robbery and murder. The officer of the law who intervenes to save a pure woman from a rapist and has to use physical force in so doing, is sinning against God! Who can believe it! When a criminal who is moved by hate commits murder, is it a reasonable philosophy which concludes that the judge who sentences him and the officer who executes him, are also haters and murderers? And when a free nation must go to war in its own defense against international marauders, are its armed forces, from the Commander-in-Chief on down, criminals if they happen to hurt somebody!

We believe that all aggressive wars are sinful, and that nations bent on conquest must learn the ways of peace. But there is only one way for the belligerent natures of ungodly men to be tamed, and that is by accepting the gospel of Christ. In His kingdom, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." He "shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). Under the Lord's dominion, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fattling together; and a little child shall lead them" —(Isaiah 11:6). These words describe in a figurative way the peace and tranquility within the Lord's kingdom, and among His people whose natures have been changed by the gospel.

If you would let the peace of God rule in your hearts, you

must bow in submission to His will. Your doubt and despair must be turned into faith and hope, your impenitent heart must be melted by repentance, your tongue of silence must joyously cry out in a public surrender to Christ, and your spirit of revenge must be changed by the new birth of water and the Spirit. Only then can you bear the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22). And having borne the fruit of the Spirit through your Christian life, the God of peace shall say to you at the end of time, "Come home my child."

IS IT EVER RIGHT TO KILL — NO. 2

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 256

December 23, 1956

No Christian may be militaristic or belligerent in heart. The angels sang when Christ was born, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). There must be nothing in our hearts but good will, and we must, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). As the apostle Peter says we must "seek peace, and ensue it" (I Peter 3:11).

The twelfth chapter of Romans is an important part of the Christian's manual. It contains the rules for the regulation of Christian conduct. In the closing five verses Paul gives the rules for keeping peace with one's neighbor. First, recompense to no man evil for evil. Second, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Third, avenge not yourselves. Fourth, be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. In his personal conduct the Christian must observe these divine rules all the time.

But what of discipline and law enforcement? These are in other realms of God's authority. The New Testament recognizes these other realms and it allows a Christian to operate in these realms of discipline and law enforcement, even though the methods used are not the same as those in the kingdom of Christ. If the offending party is a child, the parent, even though he is a Christian, must teach his child what is good and evil; and he must control him, although it may require physical force to do so, which cannot be employed under the rules of Christian conduct in Romans 12. The parent, nevertheless, is operating under God's authority in another realm.

Suppose that despite all of your efforts under the rules of love and kindness, someone inflicts upon you serious bodily injury? It is reported to the police, and the attacker is arrested.

You are called to testify in court. You tell the truth without coloring it by personal feeling, and the guilty party is sentenced to a prison term for his attack. Have you recompensed evil for evil? Have you broken the command to "be at peace?" Have you disobeyed what is written that "vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord?" Have you been overcome of evil? The answer to these questions is, No. No evil has been committed in the enforcement of the law. The employment of physical force in its proper sphere, and in the manner prescribed by God's authority, is **good** and **necessary**. The methods employed in a material realm are not rendered null and void, because they are not to be used in a spiritual realm. Force has no place in Christ's kingdom, because citizenship there is spiritual and voluntary. It would spoil every act of worship and service. There is no virtue in doing what we are compelled to do. But a Christian can and is even commanded to operate in other realms than the church.

Of the qualifications of elders in the church, the Lord says, "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"). Now, a man cannot employ **force** as an elder in Christ's kingdom, but the only way he can **prepare** and **qualify** himself for the eldership, according to the Lord, is by the experience gained in the wise **use of discipline** which may involve force in the home!

The apostle Paul was born a Roman citizen. When he became a Christian he did not repudiate his citizenship in a civil kingdom; he exercised it. On at least one occasion he permitted **an armed force to escort him** to his destination to protect him from his enemies who had sworn to kill him. Had they attempted to carry out their threat, Paul knew that the soldiers would have used the force of arms, and if necessary would have killed the attackers in protecting Paul's life. Was Paul's practice here, as a Roman citizen, inconsistent with his teaching in the Roman letter? The answer again is, No.

It should be remembered that Paul did not divide the Roman letter into chapters. In the closing verses of the twelfth chapter when he forbids a Christian's taking personal vengeance, he declared that "vengeance belongeth" to the Lord. The first verses of Romans 13, which follow immediately, tell **how** the Lord **exercises** this vengeance on the evildoer. The apostle said, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. . . . For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:1,3,4).

The sword is an instrument of death. The officer of the law is the officer of God when he must use the sword to punish the evil-

doer. The apostle Paul says, "For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they (the officers) are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing" (Romans 13:6). Administering capital punishment therefore is divinely sanctioned as a prerogative of government in the punishment of evildoers. The idea that some have in these matters would make every peace officer, sheriff or policeman, a murderer, whether he is ever actually forced to kill or not, for **he beareth not the sword in vain**, and he is sworn to do what his office would in case of necessity require, just as in case of the soldiers who furnished the armed escort for Paul. The administration of capital punishment in the persecution of the evildoer by the government does not differ in principle from a defensive war which the government must prosecute to protect the lives and liberties of its citizens.

The government is ordained of God and it bears the sword for this very purpose, to enforce law for the common good, suppress and punish crime, and it assuredly has the right to defend itself against invasion and pillage by ruthless attackers. Such function of government is an "ordinance of God." What good would law be without its penalties and what could a civil government do without police and military forces to back it up and enforce it?

Those who oppose defensive warfare should add another article to their creed, declaring their belief that a Christian should not vote or hold office, "for no man who votes and takes active part in the affairs of government can consistently oppose all wars. He may, of course, oppose wars of conquest, but not of defense. You elect a man to office, and he takes oath that he will defend and protect the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic; and then you profess to believe that it is not right to help him do what you elected him to do! Our government is now waging war against domestic enemies—enemies of the government—and these enemies are well armed. It is war—an armed conflict. Is it wrong for the government to engage in this war? If so, why did you elect men to carry it on? Or did you elect men to do a thing that you think would be wrong for you to do? Would it be any different if a foreign government should undertake to murder and rob our people?" (R. L. Whiteside, in *Gospel Advocate*, June, 1942).

As the late and beloved Brother G. H. P. Showalter has written, "It must be remembered that the relation of the Christian to earthly governments is not altered or changed because the government is at war. Whatever service we render the government, whether in money, chattels or labor, we render for the general support of the government. In times of peace the government punishes law breakers, executes criminals, and we support the government in this, by performing the service the government imposes. There is no difference in war. . . . When a nation commits depredations on another nation and on organized society, and the great nations of the earth impose punishment on the offending nation,

it is, in no special sense different from the punishment that the nations are continually imposing on law breakers and criminals who are imprisoned or executed for their crimes committed.

"If we support the one, we should be willing to support the other. If one is right, why is not the other? Where did the apostle make any distinction in supporting the government in war, and supporting the government in times of peace?" (**Firm Foundation**, June 11, 1918).

This is not primarily a "war question." War, as such, is not the central point of discussion. The issue is one of government. It is not a question of "killing other people." When the sheriff executes the functions of his office, it is not because he wants to kill anybody or to injure the person of anybody—it becomes a matter of law enforcement. The question of war likewise is only related to the question of government. By begging the question, and talking about killing people, prejudices can be excited, but the same procedure can be used against all municipal, state and national law enforcement agencies. So why argue over war itself when the fundamental issue lies back of it?

One theory denies that a Christian may have anything to do with civil government itself—save to pay taxes. Yet Paul said in Romans 13, "for this cause pay ye tribute **also**." If the relation to the government included only the paying of taxes—what did the **also** of this Scripture include? Certainly it included law observance, and most American citizens believe it included participation in the administration of civil government. But if a Christian may participate in civil government, he may on the same principle participate in the military. The civil government cannot exist without the military to enforce it, whether it be local or national government. Local law enforcement is domestic war. Therefore, civil and military government must stand or fall together.

The apostle Paul said to the Roman governor, Festus, "If then I am a wrong doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25:11). In this statement Paul recognized the right of the government to take life under certain conditions. Had he done anything worthy of the death verdict, he would not have refused to accept the death penalty. His appeal to Caesar was therefore, an appeal to all the powers of the government, both civil and military, and carried with it all the potentialities involved in that appeal. It involved Paul in the exercise of all the force the government would have to use in seeing that his enemies did not prevent the carrying out of his appeal.

Some Christians feel that they can have no part in the affairs of civil government because Christ said, "Resist not him that is evil" (Matthew 5:39). But let us take a look at the context and scope of Jesus' teaching. It is a law against the individual seeking

and taking personal vengeance for the wrongs done him. It is not designed to allow a hoodlum to kidnap a child, or outrage a woman without interference by anybody who can stop it, even if he has to use a club or a gun.

Did the Lord mean that I am never to resist the evildoer? If a man does me bodily injury, am I to submit quietly, and even expose myself to further insult and outrage? Jesus taught that Christians should be humble, meek, lovers of peace, pure in heart, and be ready and willing to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake. They must be willing to bear a repetition of personal injuries and entertain the disposition to go even beyond certain limits to return good for evil. He strictly forbids revengeful retaliation for personal injuries. He set the example and demands that we follow in His steps.

But we do violence to the teaching of Christ if we conclude that there should be no law to function for the suppression and punishment of crime. There are lawless men in society who must be controlled by force. Jesus was not delivering a discourse against the proper functions and due processes of law and government. Our Lord's prohibition against all personal revenge was not given for the purpose of overthrowing all legal institutions and penalties. He never taught anything to aid a criminal.

In the Lord's teaching on non-resistance, He said, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew 5:42). Is this statement to be taken literally, and without any limitation? If a stranger or a beggar, or a professional borrower asks me for money, am I to grant, without hesitation, his request? Were I to do such things, would it not make me the vassal of anybody and everybody who chose to wrong me, or insult me, or lord it over me? Were the followers of Jesus to do such things, would it not derange all business and social relations, and eventually upheave the very foundations of society itself? A friend of mine asked an all-out non-resister about this giving and lending to just anybody who wanted to take him for a "touch" and he said, "It is conditional." Exactly, and so is the Lord's instruction about resisting him that is evil.

In discussing the Lord's command about non-resistance, J. W. McGarvey, one of history's greatest Bible scholars, wrote: "This command which enjoins non-resistance, like most of the other precepts of this sermon, does not demand of us absolute, unqualified passivity at all times and under all circumstances. In fact, we may say generally of the whole sermon on the mount that it is not a code for slaves, but an assertion of principles which are to be interpreted and applied by the children of freedom. We are to submit to evil for principle's sake and to accomplish spiritual victories, and not in the abject, servile spirit as blind followers of a harsh and exacting law. On the contrary, taking the principle, we judge when and how to apply it as best we can. Absolute non-resistance may so far encourage crime as to become a sin. . . .

The example given, a slap in the face, has been regarded as a gross insult in all ages, but it is not an assault which imperils life. . . . Self-preservation is a law of God giving right which, under most circumstances, a Christian can claim. He may resist the robber, the assassin and all men of that ilk, and may protect his person and his possessions against the assaults of the violent and lawless. But when the honor of Christ and the salvation of man demands it, he should observe this commandment even unto the very letter. . . . man may strive for self-protection when life is threatened without any spirit of revenge" (**Bible Banner**, June, 1942, p. 5).

The views we have expressed in this sermon embody our own personal understanding of what the Lord teaches about defensive warfare. Some faithful brethren disagree with us, and we respect their convictions. We have never disfellowshipped brethren over the so-called "War Question," and we never intend to make it a test of fellowship. War in general is so repugnant to us that we join with all conscientious Christians in praying for its banishment from the earth.

What we have said in behalf of defensive warfare has not been an effort to commit churches of Christ to this position, for all churches of the Lord are free and independent under Christ as their head to express themselves on such controversial issues.

But let us be clearly understood. We are not defending the use of force except as a last resort, and only then to preserve life. We are not advocating that nations resort to war to settle their differences, and we do not believe that any nation has a right to declare war except in self-defense. If a nation goes to war for financial or territorial conquest its citizens who are Christians must have no part, either directly or indirectly, in the effort. Government was ordained of God to minister "for good," but if it prostitutes its purpose, and starts ministering "for evil," we must then "Obey God rather than men." If the government were to order us to steal, our Christian conscience would forbid it, and if the government were to order us to attack a small and defenseless nation, we would be forced, as Christians, to disobey its orders.

The Lord's command against killing is exceedingly broad. It is the commandment of Him who judgeth the hearts of all men. In keeping it there is great reward. But we cannot obey it fully without the peace of Christ in our hearts. And His peace cannot prevail in our hearts until we turn to Him in faith, turn from sin in genuine repentance, turn toward Him in the good confession, and turn our backs to the world by a burial in baptism for the remission of our sins. Then, having been born again, we can walk in newness of life, and we can say with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). In Him we shall be peacemakers, and not

warmongers, because we are "called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

It is our prayer that all wars will cease, and that men everywhere will learn to live in peace. And in harmony with this prayer, we call upon Christians throughout the world to increase their efforts to spread the kingdom of Christ for we know that the Lord has placed within His church the only thing that will permanently improve and save the troubled world.

WAYS OF COMMITTING MURDER

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 257

December 30, 1956

You do not have to plunge a knife into a man's heart or blast his life out with a gun to commit murder. A human life can be taken slowly, and by degrees, or it can be snuffed out within a second. It can be taken directly, or indirectly, and still be murder. These stern facts will not be faced by some, and they think they are guiltless unless they personally strike the death blow, and sever the brittle thread of a man's life.

But the command against murder is far broader than such a conception as this, and there are many more people condemned by it than those for whom the police have ever searched. The apostle John said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15). Ah! friends, this commandment has more teeth than we thought. Pride, envy, malice, hate—these are murder microbes. Give them the opportunity and they will bring forth death. You say you never lifted a hand against a fellowman? No, but did you strike at his fair name, his honor, his reputation; did you thrust at him with the shafts of envy, stab him with the poisoned daggers of hate?

Here is a person who hates his rival in business, or his next-door neighbor. He shuns all open warfare with him, but he determines to destroy his character. Day by day he poisons the minds of his friends; in public he speaks words of courtesy, but behind his back he fires the shafts of scandal. His victim writhes under the touch of an unseen enemy. Friends desert him and he is left a broken wreck. No ugly spot of blood tells the tragedy. No law touches the murderer of the reputation, but one such wrong is as heartless in the eye of God as the open crime of murder.

Are such murders rare? Let all the sins of hate, such as gossip and envy, pass in review before our eyes, and who can count them? There is scarcely a calling, a political party, or a great bus-

iness enterprise, where such deeds are not committed. How many have risen to prominence by wrecking the lives of men who stood in their way? But let us all know that he who gets his blood-money by murdering reputations is, in God's sight, a murderer.

There are many indirect ways of disregarding the value of human life. It has taken a hundred and fifty years to secure the passage of adequate laws against child labor. In 1802 the first bill was introduced into the British Parliament forbidding the all night labor of children under nine years of age in the textile mills of England. The owners and stockholders of that industry made a hard fight against the bill, insisting that they would be compelled to leave England, if they were not allowed to employ these children. It was frankly admitted that such work stunted their bodies and prevented their mental development, that it took from them their chance to study and to be fitted for the duties of manhood, but they insisted that only by employing the children could the industry be made to prosper. Finally, however, the law passed and it became impossible for any nine year old child to work all night in a factory. But, strange to say, the children's parents were incensed because they wanted the money which their babies could earn.

It has been said that the hardest fights ever waged in this country were over efforts to secure laws preventing the all day or all night employment of boys and girls under fourteen years of age. Factory owners threatened to move their plants from the states which passed such laws. They were asked if the strenuous labor and the long hard hours did not affect the children's bodies and minds adversely, and they replied that they supposed it might, but if they were willing to work, and their parents did not object, what business was it of the legislature? And, of course, they always argued that the business would not pay unless child labor could be employed.

These bills were denounced bitterly by some employers, and one factory owner said he employed a good many children at different times of the year, and he could not see why he should not employ girls of ten and eleven, since he always had to pay the older ones more money! One of his friends asked him how these little ones stood it, and he replied, "Oh, of course it does not take long to wear them out, but you never have any trouble finding more" (*The Mosaic Law in Modern Life*, by C. B. McAfee, p. 146; Fleming H. Revell Company). For the most part, these bills against child labor were passed, but in one state a member of the legislature said, "it was pitiful to see how many men had important calls out of the hall just before the roll call, . . . and so escaped voting. Popular opinion would not allow them to vote against the bill, but they were not brave enough to vote for it, and manifest a higher regard for child life than for business" (*Ibid*, p. 146).

A similar disregard for life appears in the effort necessary to secure the passage of laws regulating the amount of space that

may be covered by a building. Several years ago it was found in some of our cities that the average tenement building covered ninety per cent of the lot on which it stood. Such a condition utterly prevented light and air for the tenants. There had to be many inside and dark rooms in such buildings, and that meant death or sickness. All over the country ordinances were introduced requiring a much larger percentage of the lot to be left vacant. There was immediate opposition. You can guess on what ground. The landlords admitted that more space was needed for pure air, and abundant light, but they said that a building would not pay unless it had so many rooms in an apartment, and so many apartments on the lot. In New York a Brooklyn landlord with a conscience said that the whole issue resolved itself into this question: Whether a landlord was willing to make seven per cent and save his soul or demand twenty-five per cent and lose his soul.

One of the most infamous of all slums was the old Mulberry Bend section of New York. About the turn of this century it had a murder a week, and its death rate was one hundred and seventy to the thousand, while the death rate of other parts of the city was twenty to the thousand. Determined men took hold of the Bend, tore out its crowded tenements, built modern structures, and let in the light and air by means of parks where the children could play. For several years after this transformation took place there was not a murder, nor a suicide at Mulberry Bend, and the death rate went to the normal rate of the city.

And yet it was a long and hard fight to get such horrible holes of vice destroyed. The reformers were fought at every step as visionaries, and impractical dreamers, by the owners of the wretched dens where people existed, and by politicians who did not want their supporters disturbed. Slum clearance touches men's pockets, and many of them find that they do not care as much for human life as they do for their revenues. But let every property owner know of a surety that in all moral decency he must share the shame and responsibility for sin if he shares the profit of it. All who, loving gold more than God, have any share in destroying the lives or souls of their brethren may be honorable among men, but they shall stand at the last day as murderers before the awful eyes of Him who sees things that are, and sees them as they are.

Another way that we may commit murder is through carelessness. In the Old Testament the Lord said to His people, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any fall from thence" (Deuteronomy 22:8). The roof of an Eastern house was flat, and if there were no protection built around the edge someone walking on it might fall off and be killed. Therefore, the Lord commanded that a house builder in Israel must erect a battlement around the edge of his roof lest he bring blood upon his house, "if any man fall from thence." Not for the owner's sake simply, but for the sake of others, the battlement must be built.

If we were to translate this ancient mandate into our modern American life, it would read, "Whenever you build a structure, or manage a corporation, or engage in any kind of transaction, provide beforehand against the possibility of injuring the life or health of any human being; otherwise you will be guilty of murder."

It was a part of the Mosaic Law that if an "ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, **and his owner shall be put to death**" (Exodus 21:29). Under the old law, if anyone had an ox known to be vicious, and the ox gored a man, the owner was justly put to death because of his criminal carelessness.

In view of God's concern under the law of Moses about the carelessness of men, may we take for granted that He is any less concerned about it in our day? Several years ago a concrete bridge collapsed in one of our southern states, and sixteen people drove into the murky waters of a raging torrent. They all perished. An investigation of the bridge tragedy brought to light the fact that the contractors had not used any reinforcement steel in the concrete when the bridge was built. Will the Lord hold no one accountable for this loss of life or will he brand as murderers the men whose greed was responsible for it?

Then, there is murder that is born of harmful occupations. First in this list we would place the tavern. It matters not that the killing is slow; the killing is moral murder, and before every saloon we would hang a placard bearing the command, "Thou shalt do no murder." When a man in a fit of intoxication commits some terrible crime, the person who sold him the drink bears a moral responsibility for the sin, and he should be made to share in the consequences of his act. Several eminent judges of our country have more than once expressed from the bench their regret that the law did not allow them to summon the saloon-keeper, whose drink had been the direct cause of a crime, to stand in the dock with the prisoner and share with him in his punishment.

The command against committing murder forbids us to expose either ourselves or others to needless physical risks. Of course, it is right, and often it is our duty to venture our lives in a worthy cause. We honor those who, through the years, have not counted their lives as dear unto themselves that they might bring help and enrichment to others. We honor those who have toiled for this end in the realm of the spiritual. We also honor those who, like Walter Reed in his battle with yellow fever, have dared ghastly death in order to destroy some deadly disease. There is no price too great to pay in order to fulfill our mission of service to our fellows.

But so many of our risks are silly and sinful. Day after day in our cities men and women are haled before our courts for

reckless driving while in a state of intoxication. Liquor has this devilish effect: it dulls our finer faculties, and arouses our baser ones. It stupifies Dr. Jekyll and stimulates Mr. Hyde. The modest girl becomes less modest after a few cocktails. The timid man becomes more bold. The partially intoxicated driver is emboldened to take risks that he would not otherwise take. But while liquor increases his daring, it diminishes his capacity to handle both himself and his machine. The man, therefore, who drives a car while even slightly under the influence of drink is a potential killer and he is subjecting himself and others to unnecessary physical risks.

The divine prohibition against murder also forbids the exposing of ourselves or others to moral risks. To put stumbling-blocks in the way of the innocent; to tempt the weak into the paths of impurity or vice; to play the part of the devil; to betray those who have trusted us; to destroy the souls for whom Christ died—these are the deadliest crimes which man can commit! He who acts as the torch-bearer to sin; he who first plants the seeds of hell in the soul of one of Christ's little ones; he who leads another over the thin border-line of ruin by teaching him to lie, or to gamble, or to drink, or to destroy the inner sanctities of his nature, may be, in God's sight, a ten times worse murderer than many who have been hanged.

You may reason that you can drink socially without any risk to yourself, but before you settle the matter in your mind, what about your children? What about their friends who visit at your house? Can they drink socially and not be led into drunkenness? Do they not need the best example you can set for them, and all the moral strength you can give to them? In the Old Testament God said, "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, and the sword come, and take any person from among them; he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6). We all have somebody to answer for: the elders, the members of the church, the teacher, his class, the parents, their children. Ministers, leaders, teachers, parents, can we stand up and testify as Paul did before the Ephesians, when he said, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Can we? Let us remember that in Bethel in northern Palestine is a double grave where lie the bones of a man of God who turned aside from duty and was slain, and beside his bones lie the bones of an old prophet who should have been his friend but was his tempter, and led him down to death. The young man was taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will God require at the hand of the old prophet who led him into sin. Let us not forget that when we subject people to unnecessary moral risks, and their moral lives are destroyed thereby, we are guilty of moral murder.

Surely we must all agree that the command against murder forbids self-slaughter. The Bible says, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." Your life belongs to God; it belongs also

to your fellowman. To fling it away is wrong. It is, as a rule, to play the coward. Many a man, having made a mess of life through his own folly, finds himself face to face with difficulties that he has not the gallantry to meet. He, therefore, proceeds to escape his responsibilities by suicide, thus leaving the burdens he should have carried to be borne by others. Even heathen Aristotle declared: "To die in order to avoid the pains of poverty, or anything that is disagreeable, is not the part of a brave man, but of a coward; for it is cowardice to shun the trials and crosses of life, not undergoing death because it is honorable, but to avoid evil" (**The Ten Commandments** by George D. Boardman, p. 185).

As Clovis Chappell says, "Not only is it wrong for us to kill ourselves directly by a gun or by poison; it is also wrong to kill ourselves by degrees, by some form of dissipation. The man who digs his grave with his teeth is guilty before God and his fellows. To indulge in any pleasure at the price of premature death is wrong, however innocent that pleasure may seem. Some time ago a friend of mine said to me as he lighted a cigarette, 'I have tobacco heart. My doctor has told me that if I do not quit smoking it is going to kill me. I did quit for a while, but I missed it so much that I made up my mind I would rather die sooner than to deny myself the pleasure of smoking.' In my opinion, that man, and every man who does day by day that which he believes will shorten his life, is, in some measure, guilty before God of the breaking of this commandment" (**Ten Rules for Living**, p. 89).

There are many different forms of murder. There is wilful, premeditated murder; sudden, passionate murder brought on by anger; infanticide which includes abortion; lynching, the wicked result of mob violence; killing by murderous occupations, such as the saloon business and the sale of narcotics; destroying life through criminal carelessness; breaking parental hearts by wicked words and unkind treatment; oppression of laborers by heartless and avaricious employers, and murders born of thoughtlessness.

When you survey your own situation, if you find that you have committed murder in one or more of these ways, we ask you not to despair of hope. The Lord will forgive you. He forgave the Jews who cried for the blood of Christ, and He forgave Paul who had a hand in the stoning of Christians. These people were forgiven when they believed the gospel, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in the Lord, and were baptized into Him. The Lord will forgive you, too, if you will comply with these divine conditions. Your heart will be purified by faith, your life will be changed by repentance, and your relationship to God will be changed by baptism from that of an alien to a citizen in the kingdom of His dear Son. Sin-sick and burdened soul, will you cast your cares upon the shoulders of Him who cares for us all.

QUESTION FOR DECEMBER 23, 1956

"WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT OBSERVING CHRISTMAS?"
(Question from Colora, Maryland).

We believe that it is all right to exchange gifts during the Christmas season, but we do not observe the day as holy. We attach no religious sanctity to the day, nor to the season. There are two reasons why we do not observe Christmas as a holy day.

In the first place, no one knows the date of Christ's birth, and we feel that God would have revealed this information if he had wanted the date observed as holy.

In the second place, the apostle Paul rebuked the Galatians for observing days and seasons as holy. He said to them, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Galatians 4:10,11).

QUESTION FOR DECEMBER 30, 1956

"SHOULD CHRISTIANS PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER EVERY SUNDAY?" (Question from Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania).

Yes, Christians are obligated to partake of the communion every Lord's Day. The Lord commands that we eat the supper in memory of Him, and the New Testament definitely sets the day for the communion. In Acts 20:7 we read, "And upon the **first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." By **command** the Lord places upon us the obligation and the privilege of communing with Him, and by **example** He specifies the day on which we must partake of His supper.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

November 30, 1956

Receipts	\$22,299.80
Expenditures	\$18,770.33
Receipts Exceed Expenditures by	\$ 3,529.47

This abbreviated financial statement is being made in order to have the report printed without delay. Any information other than these figures will be given gladly on request and up-to-date statements will be printed at regular intervals.

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